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TAGS: MARR PREL NATO FR

SUBJECT: FRANCE HAS A NARROWER PERSPECTIVE FOR GLOBAL PARTNERSHIPS

REF: PARIS 2592

Classified By: Acting Political Counselor Bruce Turner, Reasons 1.4 B/D

¶11. (C) On April 24, in advance of the Informal Ministerial in Sofia, polmiloff followed up on reftel discussion on Global Partnerships with Nicolas Niemtchinow, MFA DAS-equivalent Director for NATO issues. Niemtchinow said France thought it timely to re-examine NATO's Partnerships, in discussion with the concerned partners, given the changes that have taken place in the world since their establishment.

¶12. (C) In terms of some of the specifics found in our Global Partnerships paper, Niemtchinow said France understood the need to discuss security issues and related operations with like-minded countries, such as Australia and South Korea. He added that many Europeans, however, favored reaching out to the former European neutrals first, in particular those, such as Austria, Finland, Sweden and Ireland, who are members of the EU but not of NATO. He noted anecdotally that there were already many more Swedish and Irish, than Australian or South Korean, troops participating in joint operations with NATO. Given Europe's small footprint in the Pacific, Europeans felt a closer strategic link with these former European neutrals than with countries further afield, he suggested. At a minimum, it made sense to begin with them first.

¶13. (C) Turning to the general concept of partnerships, Niemtchinow emphasized that France fully accepts the principle of reaching out to new global partners. The GOF, however, believes that while the Alliance needs to reach out to others on specific issues, NATO also needs to protect its stakeholders. Prospective new partners are not allies and should not be given the same guarantees (Article V) or decision-making rights, in the NAC for instance.

¶14. (C) Additionally, Niemtchinow said France would have a problem with efforts to expand our linkages with new global partners beyond security issues to the level of a "political dialogue." By way of example, he stated that the GOF could not envision discussions on China with NATO's Pacific "allies," for instance. (Note: This position is likely linked to France's often-raised concern that NATO should take care to avoid being misperceived in other regions as a specifically Western alliance.)

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